



...solve thorny business challenges in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

[www.x5accountants.com](http://www.x5accountants.com) | 01323 720555

## Build value, sell more, struggle less – ask the right questions like an 8-year-old...

Success comes when your customers buy from you.

They buy when they recognise the value of what you're selling.

Ask both 'sad' questions and 'happy' questions and you build value for customers.

Both are needed, and both can be learned.

If it's easy for an 8-year-old to see there are two types of questions – sad and happy questions – we can all learn to use both, build value and sell more. 100 of the world's largest industrial companies do and they sell lots!

You can do the same.

### IN A NUTSHELL

Ask the right questions in the right way and your clients will tell you how valuable your product or service is, you won't have to tell them. Customers persuade themselves to buy rather than you having to persuade them.



©jesadaphorn/Shutterstock

### Does it really work?

IBM, Honeywell and many more all prove that asking the right questions in the right way works, but only after Xerox proved that it worked in Newcastle, Tyne & Wear!

The 35 salespeople in the Newcastle office of Xerox, were ranked 16th out of 17 offices across the UK.

When this new way of asking questions was introduced, they jumped to 5th best.

6 months later they were ranked 1st in the UK. They had doubled their sales conversion rate!

They only lost their top slot when the other teams were also trained to ask sad and happy questions in the right way!

Asking the right questions in the right way clearly works.

### HERE'S THE PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

Ask 4 types of questions to build value.

**Situation questions;**  
**Problem questions;**  
**Implication questions; and**  
**Needs/Payoff questions.**

This SPIN framework for asking questions works at building dissatisfaction and then resolving that dissatisfaction.

Can you recognise which of the four question types are sad and which are happy questions?

## You know how bad it can feel...

Ask questions in the wrong way and it can go horribly wrong.

We've all turned away from someone trying to sell us a car, house or washing machine when they ask a clumsy question.

For example, if we'd only just met and I asked:

*"If I could show you how to reduce your heating costs, would you be interested in our new heating system?"*

You know you're being sold to but you're nowhere near ready to make a buying decision. You'd either go on the defensive or simply tell me to 'exit stage left'!

In a different way if you're asked too many questions about your situation, rather than helping the conversation progress and getting to the point, again you'll turn away because I'm not respecting your time or desire to move forward.

**STOP** asking too many situation questions and

**START** asking sad and happy SPIN questions that build value - you need both

## Respectful questions that work...

Xerox trained their team with the help of Neil Rackham and his training company Huthwaite around their SPIN framework of happy and sad questions. The results prompted many other large companies, like IBM and Motorola, to follow suit.

The Huthwaite team went on to investigate more than 35,000 sales visits and calls in 50 industries and across 23 countries. Neil Rackham shares the findings in his book 'SPIN selling' to show us the way to build value and sell more for our businesses.

## Focus on investigating...

Do you build value by telling your customer how good your product is, or instead, ask about the way your product can help solve their challenges, difficulties and stresses?

Investigating the specific and explicit needs of your customer requires you to ask good questions in a respectful way. The SPIN framework



helps you do this in a way that helps customers genuinely feel a need for your product or service.

## Use the SPIN framework...

### Start easy - part 1

**SITUATION** questions uncover facts and insights about your customer's current situation.

*"What equipment do you use now?"*

*"How many people work here?"*

*"How often are you training your team?"*

### KEY FACT

Research by the Huthwaite sales training organisation clearly shows that when you ask too many situation questions, you turn your customer off. Check out the 5-minute video by Neil Rackham in the download tools for more on this.

### Start easy - part 2

**PROBLEM** questions ask your customer to talk about their problems, difficulties and dissatisfactions.

*"What quality issues are your current machines creating?"*

*"When and where do your bottlenecks happen?"*

*"Are you satisfied with the profit margin you're making?"*



Like Neil Rackham says:

*"...if you can't uncover any problems to solve, you don't have a basis for a business relationship... problem questions provide the raw*

*material on which the rest of the sale will be built.*

*Plan and ask problem questions. Aim, in the average call, to ask a customer about problems, difficulties and dissatisfactions at least half a dozen times."* Neil Rackham

Problem questions can feel uncomfortable at first but problem questions (sad), are directly linked with sales success.

### KEY FACT

Because of a cultural difference, salespeople in Japan ask very few problem questions compared with western salespeople.

Despite this cultural challenge, when trained to ask respectful problem questions, the team at the Engineering Products Division of Fuji Xerox saw sales increase by 74% when compared with an untrained group.

### Dive deeper - part 1

**IMPLICATION** questions probe your customer about the effects, impact and consequences of their problems. These can be past consequences or expected future consequences.

*"When a bottleneck builds up, what impact does that have on customer deliveries?"*

*"When quality has been affected in the past what happened?"*

*"If this continues what will be the impact on customer loyalty and team morale?"*

If problem questions are 'sad' can you see how by probing further, you are uncovering the true depth and

costs of the issues your customer is experiencing?

You'll also be uncovering previously unstated problems and so build their sense of dissatisfaction (implication questions make problems feel worse – really sad!). But as a result, they build the need for change and sense of value in a solution that can resolve their issues.

Implication questions need careful wording (planning) so that they remain respectful (especially in Japan). Dreaming up respectful implication questions, on the hoof, in a customer meeting, doesn't work well.

Instead, do the extra work of preparing your questions before meetings.

## KEY FACT

This extra work pays off as Huthwaite's research clearly shows that implication questions are strongly linked to success, especially as the complexity or scale of what you're selling increases, or there's the need to build long term customer relationships.

Now for the happy questions!

## Dive deeper – part 2

**NEEDS/PAYOFF** questions prompt your customer to tell you about the

usefulness of a solution.

*"How would faster delivery times help you with your customers?"*

*"What impact will more consistent quality have on your working week?"*

*"How quickly would you see a boost in morale if customer complaints reduced?"*

Implications and Needs/Payoff questions can be seen as a double act – one builds discomfort and the other dissolves the pain. These happy payoff questions focus your customer's attention on the solution and get them telling you why it will work for them. They persuade themselves of the merit and value of your solution.

Huthwaite's research shows that implication and needs/payoff questions are a powerful partnership for increasing your sales success.

Check out the video in the downloadable support tools and see how a businessman explains how he's used the SPIN framework to help him increase sales volumes AND increase prices.

To help you make the most of the SPIN question-set, please check out the downloadable tools for a simple 2-step way for preparing truly great questions that build value and help you sell more.

## TIME TO DISAGREE

**"Some of our people run a mile if there's any talk of selling – getting them to learn more about selling is never going to work."**

One way to look at the SPIN question framework is a way to HELP CUSTOMERS GAIN VALUE rather than sell them your product or service.

Indeed, when you take a 'helping' perspective, the SPIN framework helps resolve challenges and issues with teenagers, parents and other people you care about, not just customers. Why not try it out with your closest challenging teen as well as with your customers?!

Prepare your thoughts on the problems customers (teenagers) are facing and the questions you're going to ask in order to help them – the downloadable tools can help you prepare.

**"Doesn't asking problem questions make you sound like a second-hand car salesperson?!"**

Yes it does if you ask clumsy, badly timed and disrespectful questions. But if you can plan out the problems to focus on and then the questions you're going to ask, you can remain both respectful and professional.

Think of the SPIN questions as a way of helping your customer and you'll avoid sounding too 'salesy'.

## ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

**"Aren't all good salespeople already asking these questions?"**

You're right. As already mentioned, the SPIN questions are what successful salespeople ask on a good day when it's all going very well for them. So why not ensure that everyone who interacts with your customers builds the skills of SPIN questions and uses them when in conversation with your customers? Then you'll have more people doing what works more often.

Check out the downloadable tools for extra videos, resources and a few exercises you can use to help build your SPIN questioning skills. You'll then be on the path to a selling breakthrough in your business.

## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

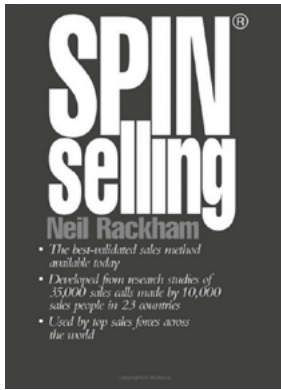
<https://businessbreakthrough.online/support-tools-build-value-sell-more/>

## 4 helping hands for you...

There's nothing revolutionary about SPIN questions – they're just the questions that successful salespeople ask on a good day when it's all going very well. All 4 types of question can be learned and mastered:

1. Ask questions to uncover necessary background information – Situation questions
2. Ask questions to search out problems, difficulties or pressing issues – (sad) Problem questions
3. Ask questions to get clarity on the seriousness of the problem – (sad) Implication questions
4. Ask questions about the usefulness or desirability of a solution – (happy) Needs/Pay-off questions





## SPIN Selling

### Neil Rackham

Neil Rackham, a Brit, sold selling skills to many USA global companies (before bringing it back to the UK). He was successful because he took a serious research approach to what works and what does not work when selling complex, high-ticket products and services. Rackham, and his company Huthwaite, examined more than 35,000 sales calls made by thousands of salespeople in 23 countries relating to larger high-value sales situations. Valuable research worth taking seriously.

In his book Neil Rackham brings the SPIN framework to life with role plays and stories that prove the SPIN framework really works.

# YOUR 'MAKE IT HAPPEN' SPIN CHECKLIST:

Just like the 8-year-old could see the difference between sad and happy questions when watching her father at Huthwaite plan a set of questions, you want to be able to do the same. The SPIN question framework helps you build value in your customer's mind because of both the sad and happy questions – both are needed.

So why not use the SPIN question framework with your customers and as a result build value and sell more for your business?

### 1. Ask questions to uncover necessary background information – SITUATION questions

But remember to restrict these questions to a handful of questions only – ask too many and your customer will soon get bored and frustrated with you. And if you can, ask situation questions about facts that relate to your products and services.

### 2. Ask questions to search out problems, difficulties or pressing issues – (sad) PROBLEM questions

Before meeting your customer, work out what problems they might have (problems that your product helps resolve). And work out what problem questions you should ask. Yes, ask your prepared problem questions but be sure to go one step further to probe and understand their explicit and specific needs.

### 3. Ask questions to get clarity on the seriousness of the problem – (sad) IMPLICATION questions

It's one thing to uncover the customer's problems, but you achieve a deeper understanding when you ask about the impact, the effects and consequences of their problems. Chances are you'll uncover previously unthought-of issues, costs and stresses and fully expose the extent of the challenges your customer is experiencing. They'll then better appreciate the value of your solution.

### 4. Ask questions about the usefulness or desirability of a solution – (happy) NEEDS/PAY-OFF questions

Turn the challenges and impacts you've revealed already and ask about what the solution would mean to them. What impact would result from resolving their extensive and explicit problems?

**As always, just knowing about a business breakthrough is not enough, it's important to put it to work! Use the downloadable support tools to help you.**

## GET YOUR BITESIZE SUPPORT TOOLS NOW

<https://businessbreakthrough.online/support-tools-build-value-sell-more/>

To help you better understand and put to work the SPIN framework of questions use the support tools and resources – you'll then build value and sell more.

FOR MORE EDITIONS OF BUSINESS BREAKTHROUGHS, PLEASE GO TO: <https://businessbreakthrough.online/library>

Bitesize  
Business  
Breakthroughs



...solve thorny business challenges in the time it takes to drink a cup of tea

